2nd November, 1916, at which Admiral Jellicoe was present, it was reported that:—

" The War Committee are of opinion that the protection of shipping and the maintenance of our tonnage is one of the gravest questions at present confronting the Allies. . . .

Interview with War Committee

Admiral Sir John Jellicoe was in complete agreement with the Board of Admiralty that, whatever might be done in the future in the direction of fresh inventions, the defensive arming of merchant ships provides, at present, the most effective means of protecting merchant ships against submarines, as is clear from the statistics supplied to the War Committee.

3,000 guns wanted

The War Committee were informed by the representatives of the Admiralty that 3,000 guns, 12-pounder size and upwards, preferably four-inch are required. This estimate is made after allowing for ships engaged on distant voyages to call at some convenient port to land or embark their armament, according as they are leaving or entering the danger zone. 500 guns are on order in America, and some 240 are being obtained from Japan, but at present delivery is only taking place at the rate of eighty guns a month/'

At that rate half our mercantile marine might be sunk before the other half was

Integrity

armed,

Departmental It was decided that a conference should
Conference be held at an early date between experts
summoned &Qm ^ Munitions Ministry and the
Admiralty on the subject, as the War
Committee